



## *Basira Jan Returns Home*

KABUL, Afghanistan – The little girl that won everyone’s affection when she first came to Camp Phoenix in June 2005 has finally returned from her journey to the United States. By the time Basira Jan left Indiana following a procedure to correct a condition known as Tetralogy of Fallot, the 6-year-old whose skin would turn blue if she walked too fast was riding a bike “like a mad woman” and leading her father on long walks according to the doctor who performed her surgery. Mark Turrentine, from Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, Ind., was part of a medical team that helped restore normal movement of oxygen-enriched blood through Basira’s body. All of this was made possible through the efforts of Task Force Phoenix Soldiers from the Indiana and Florida Army National Guard, and members from the Central Indiana Rotary Club. Although the surgery went well, Basira suffered a small setback when she contracted pneumonia and then a virus. But in early December her health and energy returned and she was off to Florida and a visit to Disney World sponsored by members of the Florida National Guard before boarding a flight in Orlando that brought she and her father back to Afghanistan. In addition to learning about American traditions such as Halloween – she dressed as a princess – Basira became a fan of Barbie dolls, video games, McDonald’s and everything at Disney World. And thanks to Guardsmen who cared, she will have a chance to live a normal life.



Col. Norman “Butch” Redding (center) welcomes Basira and her father, Ghulam Ghaus, back home.

Photo by Lt. Col. Gregory Moore  
Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix PAO



# A Visit to Allahaddin Orphanage

KABUL, Afghanistan – When you ask someone where he or she grew up, and they say an orphanage, you automatically assume the worst. A place that is dirt filled, with tons of kids and not much love at all. To be honest with you, however, the orphanage “Allahaddin” we drove into was a pleasant surprise. The children were fully clothed for the cold weather and seemed to be so happy.

We arrived in LTV’s, with a 5-ton truck full of donated items for the young people. When the flap of the truck was pulled back, there were boxes on top of boxes on top of boxes full of clothes and toys for these children. In order to show respect for the culture of Afghanistan, we organized the items into stacks that could be distributed in designated areas for boys and girls.

A security guard and a wide set of stairs separated the two groups, with the younger children and boys on the first floor and the girls on the second floor. We had to wait until the principal arrived before even other females could go onto the second floor. When the principal joined us and we proceeded upstairs we noticed none of the female teachers wore burkas. For a split second it was like we were in an American school, not an orphanage in Afghanistan.

The president of the department of orphanages is a delightful woman by the name of Soraya Abdullah Hakim. After speaking with her, there was no doubt that she really cared for the welfare and education of all of the children in the orphanages over which she presides. There are six categories of young people in the orphanage. The first is children whose mother is alive, father is dead, and mother cannot support them. The second is children with no parents.

The third consists of those who are from families with low or no income that cannot take care of their children. These young people have parents or siblings that come and get them for many of the holidays and celebrations. The fourth is children who work with the civil minister. The fifth and sixth are smaller categories. They include boys and girls who have been kidnapped or who have been brought over from the border of neighboring countries.

While the orphanage system may sound like it is well organized and an incredibly safe haven for young



Spc. Shane Farley works on his reflexes while teaching the “Slap Game” to several young boys at the Allahaddin Orphanage.



Maj. Bret Allgood hands a box down to waiting members of the Training Assistance Group and Canadian contingent at the Allahaddin Orphanage.

Photos by Sgt. Henry St. Charles  
Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix PAO NCO



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children, there is one harsh fact that has to be noted there is a 0% adoption rate in Afghanistan. It might seem hard to believe when you see how well the children are cared for, but Hakim's explanation helped put this in perspective.

In Afghanistan, the elders pass down to the next generation the history and values that define their unique culture. More than twenty years of warfare in the country has disrupted the traditional family structure, which is the foundation of social identity. If the large number of children presently in orphanages were to grow up with families in Pakistan, Iran, or even the United States, the opportunity to pass on Afghanistan's unique heritage and culture would be lost. By leaving the children in the orphanage, these essential values are passed on.

This may not seem so important to Americans, but put yourselves in the shoes of the people of Afghanistan and think of how difficult it would be if you never had the chance to learn about your heritage or culture because you were stripped away from it.

Our day at Allahaddin was a remarkable one, and opened our eyes to one of the great challenges facing the people of Afghanistan bringing up the next generation to understand and appreciate their culture.

Story by U. S. Army Pfc. Jennifer Fay, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix

## *With French Special Forces in Spin Boldak*

SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – South of the city of Kandahar, near the Pakistani border, embedded trainers of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix are mentoring their ANA soldiers at Spin Boldak, along with a contingent from the French Special Operations Command. 1st Lt. Justin Burt and Master Sgt. Patrick Meegan have been at the forward operating base since mid-September with members of Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 205th Corps.

This region of Kandahar Province has seen a great deal of Taliban activity over the years, including their first victory on the road to taking over Afghanistan. In October 1994, financed by the transport mafia that controlled the lucrative Afghan Transit Trade out of Quetta and Chaman in Baluchistan, approximately 200 Taliban from Kandahar and Pakistan attacked and defeated a garrison in Spin Boldak manned by soldiers loyal to the warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Following this battle, the Taliban were allowed to seize 18,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles and 120 artillery pieces that were stored in an arsenal that had previously belonged to Hekmatyar. The motivation for the transport mafia was to eliminate the numerous warlord factions that were extracting exorbitant "customs fees" and preventing expansion of their traditional smuggling from Pakistan, through Afghanistan, to Iran and Central Asia. With their success at Spin Boldak, the Taliban expanded their ambitions and were able to finally take Kabul in September 1996. Today, remnants of the Taliban and their former transport mafia friends in the area still cause trouble for the Afghan central government.



Col. John Martin (right), commander of the French Special Operations detachment at Spin Boldak, explains his mission to Maj. Gen. Donald C. Storm (left), Adjutant General of Kentucky, and Brig. Gen. Oliver J. Mason Jr. (center), Adjutant General of Massachusetts, during a Thanksgiving Day visit.



Col. Norman "Butch" Redding, Deputy Task Force Commander (right) with 1st Lt. Justin Burt (left) and Master Sgt. Patrick Meegan (center) at Spin Boldak.

Photos by Lt. Col. Gregory Moore  
Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix PAO





Continued from Page 3>

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Although the security of Kandahar Province is primarily the responsibility of United States troops, a French joint special forces detachment led by Col. John Martin, has been hard at work limiting the activities of Taliban and other anti-coalition militia forces. The unit consists of soldiers from the Regiment de Parachutistes d'Infanterie de Marine, members of the Groupement des Fusiliers-Marins Commandos, and representatives from the Groupement des Fusiliers Commandos de l'Air. During a recent holiday visit by the CJTF Phoenix deputy brigade commander and the Adjutants General of Kentucky and Massachusetts, the French commander outlined his responsibilities and the successful integration of ANA soldiers with their ETTs in recent operations.

For Burt, who is a traditional Guardsman from New Mexico, "every day is a surprise." The opportunity to work with the elite French special forces has been a unique experience. Most recently, he and his ANA unit took part in a 6-day mission that included preparation and manning of a blocking position. The performance of the ANA soldiers was very gratifying, and Burt has great expectations for their continual improvement as they work side-by-side with the French.

Meegan, who hails from Anchorage, Alaska, is likewise impressed with the effort that his ANA soldiers have displayed in operations with the French. "Many of the Afghan noncommissioned officers are working exceptionally hard, in part for an opportunity to go to the United States to train," he explained. Although the language barrier was a challenge at first, everyone has learned how to communicate the essentials and learn from their training exercises and field operations.

Together, this team of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen from three nations is bringing peace and stability to southern Kandahar Province.

Story by U. S. Army Lt. Col. Gregory Moore, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix PAO

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